

IV. PARK AND RECREATION DEMAND AND TRENDS

ANNUAL VISITATION TRENDS

Lake Waccamaw State Park's annual visitation for the years from 1994 through 2006 is shown below in Figure IV-1. Visitation at Lake Waccamaw State Park is recorded by a vehicle traffic counter that is located just inside the park gate on the main entrance road to the park. Another traffic counter was added in 2004 at the dam access, located at the end of Waccamaw Shores Road. The traffic counter at the dam access also records traffic that turns around at the dead end road, so some of this traffic is not related to visiting state park facilities. Park visitation has been generally higher since completion of the park visitor's center in 1998. A per-vehicle multiplier of four persons is used.

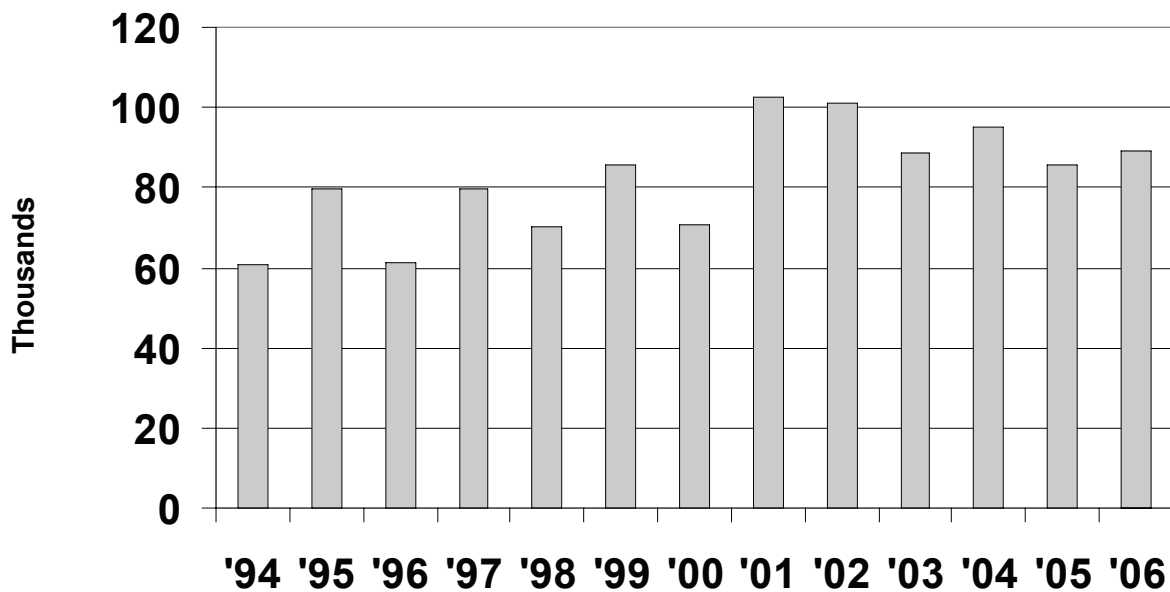


Figure IV-1. Annual Visitation: 1994 - 2006

MONTHLY VISITATION TRENDS

Figure IV-2 shows the average monthly visitation for the four years ending in 2003. Lake Waccamaw State Park's monthly visitation increases in the spring as the weather warms, peaks in June and July, and then decreases each month through the end of the year. The monthly visitation pattern suggests using seasonal and peak load personnel to assist in months of higher visitation. Where possible, staff vacation and other leave should be scheduled at times other than the higher visitation months.

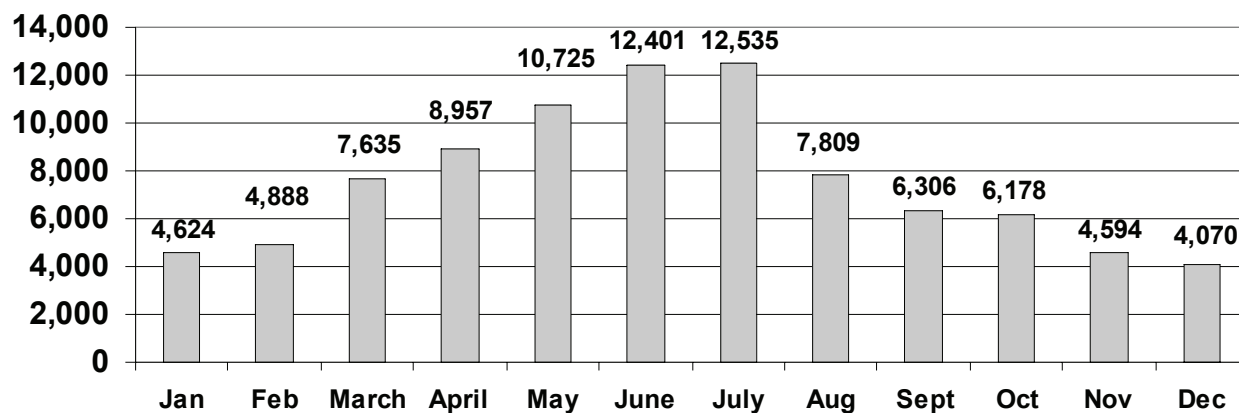


Figure IV-2. Average Monthly Visitation: 2000-2003

VISITOR INFORMATION

In 1987, the United States Forest Service was contracted to conduct a Public Area Recreation Visitors Survey (PARVS) for the North Carolina State Parks System. The survey was designed to identify visitor socio-economic characteristics and economic contributions to the state's economy. While Lake Waccamaw State Park was not one of the eight parks involved in the survey, general information concerning state park visitors is useful in assessing visitation trends at the park.

Why do people visit state park units? The convenient location was cited by 31 percent of the respondents; 25 percent thought other areas were too crowded; 21 percent liked the quality facilities; 8 percent wanted to try a new area; 7 percent enjoyed the scenic beauty; and 6 percent came to see the attraction.

More than one third of state park visitors come from within a 30-mile radius (37 percent), while 17 percent come from 30 to 60 miles away. Survey respondents indicated that the parks were their sole destination 86 percent of the time. While many visitors come from nearby, the average one-way distance traveled was 139 miles. Approximately 25 percent of state park visitors come from out of state. Visitors averaged 4.1 trips per year to North Carolina state parks.

Seventy-eight percent of those surveyed indicated that they were return visitors. The average number of return trips per year was six. Sixty-one percent of visitors statewide came with family members, 16 percent with friends, and 7 percent with both family and friends. Ten percent of visitors came alone. Visitors also came in small numbers in organized groups and multiple families.

PARVS data indicates that 16.8 percent of groups surveyed used more than one car, and that the average number of persons per car was 3.0. The average age of the park visitor was 38.2 years. The age distribution was as follows:

Table IV-1. Percent of Visitors by Age Group

<u>Under 6</u>	<u>6-12</u>	<u>13-18</u>	<u>19-25</u>	<u>26-35</u>	<u>36-45</u>	<u>46-55</u>	<u>56-65</u>	<u>Over 65</u>
6.7	11.6	10.6	12.5	20.1	16.9	0.9	7.3	4.4

Since over 18 percent of visitors are under the age of 13, a demand exists for children's programs and facilities. Approximately 12 percent of visitors are 56 and older. This older segment of the general population will be increasing, and as it does, demand for improved quality, accessibility, and safety should increase.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION IN NORTH CAROLINA

The five most popular outdoor recreation activities in North Carolina are walking for pleasure, driving for pleasure, viewing scenery, participating in beach activities, and visiting historical sites. Three out of every four households participated in walking for pleasure at least once in the past 12 months (Table IV-2). In addition to the five most popular activities, over 50 percent of the households responding to a 1989 survey participated at least once in the following activities: swimming (in lakes, rivers, or oceans), visiting natural areas, picnicking, attending sports events, visiting zoos, and freshwater fishing.

The North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey was mailed to 3,100 randomly selected residents in the spring of 1989. Forty-five percent, or 1,399 people, returned completed surveys. Each person receiving the survey was asked to estimate the number of times that household members had participated in each of 43 activities. The survey results provide good insight into the current participation of North Carolinians in a wide range of outdoor recreation activities. The survey results also closely mirror those of the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment conducted in 1994-1995 and 2000.

Table IV-2. Outdoor Recreation Activities Ranked by Popularity.

RANK	ACTIVITY	PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS PARTICIPATING
1.	Walking for Pleasure	75%
2.	Driving for Pleasure	72
3.	Viewing Scenery	71
4.	Beach Activities	69
5.	Visiting Historical Sites	62
6.	Swimming (in Lakes, Rivers, and Oceans)	54
7.	Visiting Natural Areas	53
8.	Picnicking	52
9.	Attending Sports Events	52
10.	Visiting Zoos	51
11.	Fishing - Freshwater	50
12.	Use of Open Areas	41
13.	Swimming (in Pools)	40
14.	Fishing - Saltwater	38
15.	Attending Outdoor Cultural Events	35
16.	Bicycling for Pleasure	32
17.	Other Winter Sports	31
18.	Camping, Tent or Vehicle	29
19.	Softball and Baseball	28
20.	Hunting	28
21.	Use of Play Equipment	28
22.	Power Boating	26
23.	Trail Hiking	26
24.	Jogging or Running	24
25.	Basketball	24
26.	Nature Study	22
27.	Golf	22
28.	Target Shooting	20
29.	Water Skiing	19
30.	Camping, Primitive	14
31.	Tennis	14
32.	Use Motorcycles, Dirt Bikes, ATVs	13
33.	Use Four Wheel Drive Vehicles	13
34.	Canoeing and Kayaking	13
35.	Horseback Riding	12
36.	Volleyball	12
37.	Downhill Skiing	12
38.	Football	11
39.	Soccer	7
40.	Sailboating	7
41.	Skateboarding	6
42.	Cross Country Skiing	2
43.	Windsurfing	1

PRIORITIES OF PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION FUNDING

The North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Survey asked residents a series of questions in order to identify and rank order future demand for various types of public outdoor recreation activities. Future demand was determined by asking them which activities they would have tried more often had adequate facilities been available. Respondents were then asked to rank these activities in order of importance. A scoring system was used assigning each activity a rating of high, moderate or low future demand based on the survey results.

In the second part of the analysis, the respondents' level of support for publicly funded outdoor recreation activities was determined by asking them to identify and rank those activities to which government should give highest priority when spending public money. The same scoring system used to analyze unmet demand was then applied to the survey results, with each activity receiving a high, moderate or low rating in public support for public funding.

In the final part of the needs analysis, the two ratings for each activity were combined to produce a score from one to nine that reflected both future demand and public funding priorities. The activities that ranked high in both future demand and support for public funding received the highest priority in the needs assessment. Support for public funding was given higher priority than expressed demand (Table IV-3).

Table IV-3. Priorities for Future Outdoor Recreation Activities

ACTIVITY	CODE	FUTURE DEMAND	SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC FUNDING
Walking for Pleasure	1	High	High
Camping, Tent or Vehicle	1	High	High
Picnicking	1	High	High
Beach Activities	1	High	High
Fishing - Freshwater	1	High	High
Attend Outdoor Cultural Events	1	High	High
Visiting Natural Areas	2	Moderate	High
Use of Play Equipment	2	Moderate	High
Visiting Zoos	2	Moderate	High
Visiting Historical Sites	2	Moderate	High
Bicycling for Pleasure	3	High	Moderate
Swimming (in Pools)	3	High	Moderate
Viewing Scenery	4	Moderate	Moderate
Hunting	4	Moderate	Moderate
Trail Hiking	4	Moderate	Moderate
Use of Open Areas	4	Moderate	Moderate
Target Shooting	4	Moderate	Moderate
Swimming (Lakes, Rivers, Ocean)	4	Moderate	Moderate
Fishing - Saltwater	4	Moderate	Moderate

AREA OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Bladen Lakes State Forest

The 32,237-acre Bladen Lakes State Forest in southeastern North Carolina is considered part of the state's Coastal Plain forest. Tree species include mixed hardwoods, Atlantic white cedar, loblolly, longleaf, and slash pine, as well as sweetgum, red maple, and Bald cypress. The forest also contains areas that have been identified and protected as Natural Heritage Preservation Sites. There are several areas set aside for protection and enhancement of red-cockaded woodpecker colony sites in longleaf pine. Some longleaf pine stands are also dedicated for the production and harvest of pine straw, used as mulch. Much of the forest is managed as game lands by the Wildlife Resources Commission.

Bushy Lake State Natural Area

Bushy Lake is an excellent example of a “low bay”, with its interior having the appearance of an open savannah with scattered trees, shrubs, and a variety of grasses. Although not a lake, it does contain shallow water for much of the year, as well as several small ponds. Limited access is provided for low-intensity recreational use such as nature observation, hiking, and environmental education. Park staff from Jones Lake State Park manages Bushy Lake, which is located in Cumberland County.

Green Swamp

The Green Swamp, located near Lake Waccamaw State Park, is an area of major biological significance in North Carolina. The U.S. Department of the Interior designated it as a national natural landmark in 1974. The 15,722-acre Green Swamp Preserve features examples of pine savannas, bay forests and pocosins with hundreds of different plant species. Unusual animals found in the swamp include the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, the eastern diamondback rattlesnake, Bachman's sparrow and the American alligator. The preserve is located in Brunswick County, five miles north of Supply. For more information on the Green Swamp, contact The Nature Conservancy.

Jones Lake State Park

[Jones Lake State Park](#) in Bladen County contains 1669 acres of land plus the 224-acre Jones Lake and 315-acre Salters Lake. A three-mile loop trail runs around Jones Lake and allows opportunities to experience the habitats of a Carolina Bay, while a one-mile trail journeys through bay forest and sand ridge communities. Jones Lake facilities include a visitor's center with exhibits, sandy beach, bathhouse, picnic area with one large shelter, pier and boathouse where canoes and paddleboats may be rented. A boat ramp is available for small watercraft. Nearby, twenty campsites are available with grills and picnic tables and restrooms and showers.

Lumber River State Park

[Lumber River State Park](#), created in 1989, stretches 115 miles from NC 1412 in Scotland County downstream to the North Carolina-South Carolina state line. The slow-moving blackwater river offers opportunities for canoeing, boating, picnicking, primitive camping and fishing. Facilities

are primarily located at Princess Ann, on the west side of the river in Robeson County.

Singletary Lake State Park

Primarily used for organized group camping, [Singletary Lake State Park](#) has two group camps with mess halls and kitchens, cabins and washhouses. One of the group camps was constructed as a public works project during the Great Depression. The park contains the 572-acre Singletary Lake, a Carolina Bay, and approximately 650 acres of surrounding land located in Bladen County. All of the lake and its almost four miles of undeveloped shoreline lies within the state park. A 500-foot pier extends into the lake and provides a place for swimming and sunning, and a one-mile long trail travels near the lake and through nearby forest.

Turnbull Creek Educational State Forest

Located in Bladen County within Bladen Lakes State Forest, Turnbull Creek is one of six educational state forests developed as living environmental education centers. The forest is designed to promote better understanding of the value of forests. A 3.5-mile driving trail provides visitors with a look at all phases of forest management. Foot trails and picnic sites with tables and grills and one picnic shelter are also available.

White Lake

White Lake, located in Bladen County, covers 1068 acres. The lake's clear water makes it a popular recreational resource for swimming, boating and water sports. Various private rental accommodations are available. Private development rings most of the lake's shoreline, limiting public access.

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